

FACT SHEET

AUSTIN-SAN MARCOS, TEXAS OZONE FLEX PLAN

Action

- The Austin-San Marcos Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) O₃Flex Plan is being approved during a formal signing ceremony in Austin, Texas on March 28, 2002. The signing of this Plan represents the first approved Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) developed for the O₃Flex program. The Region has worked closely with the City of Austin, the Capital Area Planning Organization (CAPCO), the Clean Air Force and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC).
- O₃Flex is a voluntary local approach to ozone attainment with pollution controls tailored to local conditions for areas currently monitoring attainment for the 1 hour standard but may be violating the 8 hour standard. Ozone Flex encourages innovative efforts that are cost-effective, flexible, and make sense to local areas. Areas with air quality meeting the 1-hour ozone standard are eligible to participate in the O₃Flex Program. Early, local controls can improve air quality in advance of EPA's designating areas as attainment or nonattainment for the 8-hour ground-level ozone standard.

Background

- The Clean Air Act requires EPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone and five other major pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment (Others pollutants: particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and lead.). Ozone is an odorless, colorless gas composed of three atoms of oxygen. Ground-level ozone is formed when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, and other industrial sources react chemically in the presence of sunlight.
- The Austin-San Marcos MSA has been very progressive in implementing an O₃flex program. The area submitted a letter of intent to participate in O₃Flex in April 2001, CAPCO developed a draft O₃Flex Plan with an extensive menu of potential voluntary ozone precursor emission control options representing from local cities, counties and corporate partners.
- The Austin-San Marcos MSA region has not experienced a 1-hour exceedance since 1985. The one-hour design value is 102ppb. The 1998-2000 8-hour design value is 88ppb. The 1999 - 2001 design value is 88 ppb. Both of these three year averages greatly influenced by a 99ppb fourth high in 1999.

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- The Plan is regional in nature. Agreement includes commitments from cities and county commissioners courts in the 5-county MSA (Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties). Signatories of the MOA include 7 Cities, 5 Counties and 12 participating groups and agencies.
- Groups involved in the process: Environmental Defense, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Texas DOT, Lower Colorado River Authority, the CLEAN AIR Force of Texas.
- Voluntary control measure commitments include: 9 Employee VMT/Commute solution strategies; 7 Fleet emission reduction strategies; 18 Other emissions reductions strategies including the use of cleaner gasoline throughout the MSA.
- The precursor emission reductions from voluntary control measures were predicted to total 6.7 tons per day (tpd) of NO_x (representing a 3.6% reduction) and 2.3 tpd VOC (representing a 1.4% reduction).
- Contingency measures to be implemented only in the event of a standard violation include: 1) 5 mph heavy truck speed limit reduction and 2) Mandatory Heavy vehicle Idling Restrictions. Other potential strategies: 1) Inspection/maintenance Program with Low-Income Repair Assistance, Retrofit, and Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Program; 2) Speed Limit Reductions of by 5 mph; 3) Equipment and Contract Specifications; 4) Recycle Impounded and Old Fleet Vehicles; 5) Heavy Truck Speed limit reduction.
- The Region has reviewed drafts of the MOA and coordinated review of drafts of the MOA with our headquarters Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) and Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ). Agency comments were provided to the MSA on March 7th with the City of Austin and the TNRCC. The comments reflected the joint efforts of R6, OAQPS, and OTAQ. The MSA did a very good job of addressing EPA's comments.

For Further Information

- For further information about the Austin-San Marcos MSA O₃Flex Plan, contact Tom Diggs, Section Chief, Air Planning (214/665-7214) or Dr. Michael Morton (214/665-8329).
- The Austin-San Marcos MSA O₃Flex Plan, Ozone Flex Guidelines and additional documentation can be accessed from the Region website at the following Internet address: <http://epa.gov/earth1/r6/6pd/air/pd-1/flex.htm>